

Kuroko no Basket Replace IV: Don't go, Alex!

Kuroko no Basket Replace IV Novel G3 - Don't go, Alex! (featuring Kagami, Himuro and Alex)

pg1

A saying goes, "One who has never traveled far away before can never achieve something big."

Travelling far takes effort and bravery. Travelling through foreign land and experiencing different customs is a valuable experience. That's why young adolescents should travel more often—or so the saying says. However, leaving the house without permission is wrong.

That is exactly what happened to these two boys, Kagami Taiga and Himuro Tatsuyo, ten and eleven years old, who went out to play for two days and one night. This is not something that should be encouraged.

After they had explored certain areas in Los Angeles, the two of them were punished by their families. Two months later, Kagami and Himuro followed their basketball coach, Alexandra Garcia—also known as Alex—to an outdoor basketball court.

"Hey, Alex, show me how to spin the ball on your finger!" Kagami asked.

It was after practice and the three of them, as always, sat on the bench to rest.

"Sure. Tatsuya, give me the ball."

"Okay."

Himuro, who was sitting between Kagami and Alex, handed her the ball. Alex took it, placed it on her right index finger and rapidly spun her hand. Using her finger as a fulcrum, the ball started to spin quickly with a 'whoosh.'

"Wow, amazing!"

Kagami stared at the ball with interest. Alex, seeing this, smiled and spun her right hand again, keeping the ball rotating with momentum.

"Taiga really likes this."

"Yes! I've also been practicing, but I haven't been able to get it to spin very well. Do you have any advice?" Kagami asked over Himuro.

"I do, but it's better to do this by yourself. That way, you'll have more of a sense of accomplishment."

"But I want to learn how to do it quickly!"

"Tatsuya, how about you?" Alex turned toward him. "Do you know how to do this?"

"I'm still practicing, but I think I've gotten the hang of it." Himuro laughed happily.

Kagami's face lit up. "Hey! Really?! Tatsuya, you're awesome! You're going to have to show me when we get back!"

"Yes. I'll show you and Alex first."

"I'm looking forward to it." Alex smiled. She held out the ball in her left hand, gave it to Tatsuya, and then stood up.

Suddenly, Himuro frowned, looking down thoughtfully. However, he immediately laughed softly and looked back up at Alex.

"We should practice a little more."

"No. We'll end here today. I have things to do."

"We're done?!" Kagami exclaimed unhappily. Alex patted his head and then left the basketball court.

"Tatsuya, let's play by ourselves then."

Kagami went over to the free throw line but he staggered slightly, almost falling, because Himuro had grabbed his hand.

"What are you doing?!"

Himuro was standing outside the court, staring in the direction Alex had left.

"Taiga, don't you notice it?"

"Huh? Notice what?" Kagami looked confused.

Himuro then told Kagami what had been on his mind for the past few days.

"Alex is probably keeping something from us," Himuro whispered.

pg2

According to Himuro, Alex had been behaving differently.

They went back to the bench and sat down. Kagami tilted his head as he listen to Himuro's words.

"Really? Alex seems the same to me. Her hair is still blond, she still wears glasses and she's still tall."

"I didn't say her appearance changed. I'm talking about something inside."

Hearing the word 'inside,' Kagami's forehead creased. Himuro explained patiently, "I meant the psychological aspect of it. There's something bothering her and making her heart uneasy."

"Alex...has something bothering her and making her heart uneasy?"

Kagami thought back. It was just yesterday when the three of them went to the basketball court when a tall man said to Alex, "Even if you were good before, now that you've retired, you're just an ordinary woman."

"Do you want to play, then?" Alex was smiling, but she had anger in her voice that scared both Kagami and Himuro. However, the thing that stuck out to Kagami the most was Alex's smile after she crushed her opponent, saying, "Come back next life, kid." Alex was so powerful—she was awesome!

No matter who challenged her, she managed to beat all of them. Didn't that mean that she was very strong? She didn't sound like what Himuro was saying.

Kagami voiced his thoughts out loud. Himuro shook his head.

"That doesn't necessarily mean she has a strong heart. That just means she's talented. I was talking about something more subtle..."

"Subtle? What does that mean?"

Because Kagami couldn't understand the vocabulary, Himuro frowned and reluctantly said, "Taiga, I can't continue this topic."

"Ah? Then don't mind me. Please continue."

"If you can't understand it, then it makes no sense for me to continue." Himuro thought for a while on how to phrase his sentences so that Kagami could understand. "This is only my opinion, but...do you think that Alex is becoming more and more like a woman?"

"What?!" Kagami didn't understand what Himuro was saying. "Tatsuya, Alex is a woman, right?"

"Of course I know that. But have you ever looked at Alex as a woman before?"

"....."

The answer was no.

Of course he knew that Alex was a woman, but to him, she was just his and Himuro's

coach. In Kagami's mind, that did not have anything to do with gender or age.

Once, when a classmate asked him, "Your basketball coach is a woman? Isn't that difficult?" Kagami's first reaction wasn't to be angry.

Instead, he said, "Oh, that's right! Alex is a woman!"

Kagami was clueless when it came to Alex's gender. However, as Himuro pointed out, even coaches have genders.

"The only reason you don't notice it is because Alex doesn't act like a woman."

In order to move easier, Alex usually wore t-shirts and jeans. She didn't wear makeup because she claimed that wiping it off after sweating was a lot of trouble. Because of her sore shoulders, she didn't wear a bra at home. And when Kagami and Himuro came over, she wouldn't cover herself, though it had made Himuro embarrassed.

Finally, Himuro concluded that it wasn't as if Alex didn't care about her appearance. It was just that she didn't show her woman charm, which led him and Kagami (though mostly Kagami) not realizing that their coach was a woman.

"I see..." Kagami nodded his head, finally understanding.

Himuro leaned in. "What I'm going to say next is the most important. Taiga, what would you think if Alex started wearing perfume?"

"Alex? She wouldn't do that," Kagami said.

Himuro shook his head. "She did today."

"...what?"

"I said that she wore perfume today."

Kagami stared at him with wide eyes. "Alex...?"

"Yes."

"Really...?"

"When she stood up from the bench, I smelled it, so that's why I thought..."

"What has happened to Alex?"

"As I've been saying since the very beginning, Alex has been acting weird."

Recently, she's been caring more and more about the intensity of the sun. And, the other day, she saw her own muscles, touched Himuro's cheek, and then sighed.

"Why would she sigh?" Kagami asked.

Himuro touched his cheek, as if remembering the scene. "I don't know. I think she said something like, 'Your skin is very nice and soft.'"

"What does that mean?" Kagami asked, extremely puzzled.

Himuro frowned. "I was a little scared at the time."

"That's right! Alex also said some strange things to me."

"She also said some things to you, too?"

Kagami nodded. He hadn't thought twice about it before, but after listening to Himuro, Kagami noticed that Alex's behavior had been strange.

"Alex called me a couple days ago. It felt weird."

"Weird?" Himuro asked.

Kagami nodded. "Yeah, it felt strange."

"How so?"

"Do you know what Alex said when she answered the phone?"

She said, 'This is the Alex family!' in Japanese."

Kagami thought that Himuro would look surprised, but instead, he just sighed. Kagami was confused.

"Isn't it strange? Alex is acting weird, right?"

"Taiga, we don't seem to be talking about the same thing." Himuro raised his head, looking a little tired.

"Ah? Does that mean that Alex is alright?"

"Yeah. What you're talking about is just the result of Alex watching too much anime."

"What?"

Alex loved to watch Japanese animations, no matter what type. She rewatched all of her favorite animes over and over, so she picked up some vocabulary and could speak Japanese fluently. However, her Japanese and English mixture would sometimes sound weird.

"So, you mean that that was just because she watched too much Japanese animation?"

"Yes. That does sound like a line from an anime."

"You had me worried for no reason!"

Himuro smiled wryly. "So, why did Alex call?"

"Ah, what she said was weird, too! She said, 'Can you make me a bento? The pretty kind. I want rice balls with ketchup and shredded seaweed on top, put sideways and in rows of three. The two on the ends have to be facing outward.' I did as she told me to. Guess what it made?"

"...what?"

"It turn out looking like a basketball! It was amazing! Then, I did as Alex told me to and used boiled eggs and seaweed to make little figurines of us! Then, because I was in high spirits, I used sausages to make a hoop. Alex must be talented to think of something like this!"

"I think that Taiga is the talented one," Himuro praised. "Without knowing any details, you still made such a bento. Though, Alex didn't think of it by herself. She was influenced by anime."

"Really? You can learn how to make basketball shaped bentos from anime?"

"I don't think it was taught in anime...though, for Taiga to make a bento for her, Alex really is..."

"It's alright. I don't hate cooking. Besides, Alex once mentioned that she liked Japanese rice and we still had a lot of rice in our house. Then again, only our house buys hundreds of pounds of rice."

Kagami thought that he had explained everything, but Himuro still seemed troubled by something. As the two of them continued to think, other kids started playing basketball on the court. Usually the two of them would join in, but they were both not in the mood today.

As the two of them walked out of the basketball court, they decided to head over to Himuro's house. They talked as they walked, but their conversation eventually strayed back to Alex's strange behavior.

"She might be hiding something."

"What is she hiding?"

"I don't know." Himuro shook his head. "But she's becoming more feminine, and she was acting strange today too; she's never ended practice early for something else."

"Yeah, I guess so, but Alex wouldn't hide—huh?"

Kagami suddenly stopped, staring and pointing to something across the street.

"That's...!"

Kagami couldn't even speak. Curious, Himuro also looking at the direction Kagami was pointing at.

Across the street was a little white church, with Alex standing in front of it. Kagami and Himuro were shocked. They both stared at the person next to Alex, speaking to her fondly.

"A...guy...?"

Kagami and Himuro stared at the man with wide eyes. He was tall and wore a blue suit as he accompanied Alex.

To Kagami and Himuro, he seemed to be under thirty years of age, had short dark brown hair, blue eyes, and wore a golden watch. No matter how they looked at it, they could see that he was definitely a man old enough to work.

Alex and the man stopped in front of a store next to the church. The man gentlemanly held the door open for her. Alex smiled and said something before entering the store. The man followed behind her.

Kagami and Himuro were frozen, but then quickly crossed the street and looked in through the window. They could see diamond necklaces, pearls, and other ornaments.

They looked at each other. Alex had gone into a jewelry store with a man. Suddenly, everything clicked as they both came to the same conclusion, yelling at the same time, "Boyfriend?!"

pg3

The two of them exclaimed in surprise. Thankfully, no one in the store heard them and came out to check out what the commotion was about.

In order not to make any sound, the two of them covered their mouths with their hands and continued to look through the window. Because there were no obstructions in the store, they could see through quite clearly. Alex and the man were in the jewelry section. Perhaps it was because she didn't know how to shop for these things, or perhaps it was because she was with her boyfriend, but Alex looked a little shy.

Himuro and Kagami left quietly.

They walked in the direction of the church. As soon as Kagami removed his hand from his mouth, he said, "That surprised me. I didn't know that Alex had a boyfriend." He kept muttering under his breath, "That surprised me. That was very surprising."

Himuro propped his chin on his right arm and held his right elbow with his left hand, pondering.

"She probably only got a boyfriend recently. That's why she was concerned about the sun. She didn't want to get tan," Himuro concluded, nodding.

Even though both of them had really wanted to know Alex's secret, now that they knew it, they were shocked.

Kagami recalled the man's image. He wore a suit and looked very gentle. He was thin, and a little shorter than Alex.

"Well, the people around us come in many types. This type is not bad."

Himuro recalled those basketball gamblers. They had an average height of 2 meters, and most of them had dark skin and huge muscles.

"That guy doesn't look like he's a basketball player. What's the point of dating someone like that?"

"Maybe she doesn't care if her boyfriend plays basketball or not, and perhaps maybe he has other area that he's good at."

"What kind of areas?"

"I don't know, but there must be a reason that Alex is attracted to him."

"I see..."

Kagami crossed his arms behind his head. Now that the excitement and shocked had died down, he started to feel a little tired.

"Ah..."

Suddenly, Himuro looked at the church and let out a cry. Kagami looked as well. Next to the sidewalk was a wall with shrubs planted along it. After the wall was a small lawn. The church was at the end of that lawn.

Himuro rushed into the lawn and looked back. The jewelry store was actually in the Church's courtyard.

"So the Church and the jewelry store are connected after all."

"Oh," Kagami turned back to look at the jewelry store. He couldn't help but ask himself, was the church also included in the jewelry business?

"Alex might want to get married."

"Hah?!"

Kagami hadn't been expecting Himuro to say something like that. His eyes widened. This came as such a shock to Kagami that his already split eyebrows split even further.

"Why do you think that?!"

"I've seen people getting married at this church. And since the jewelry store is in the Church, it probably sells wedding rings."

"W-wedding rings?! D-do you think Alex is buying a wedding ring?!"

"Maybe..."

Himuro looked at the jewelry store, half sad, half confused. The word 'marriage' suddenly registered in Kagami's brain, and he felt his heart sink.

"I don't want Alex to get married!" He yelled.

"Taiga...?"

"Why is Alex getting married?! This is Alex!" Kagami blurted out. He felt confused.

Himuro, on the other hand, said calmly, "Even though we hadn't paid a lot of attention to it before, Alex is an adult. It's normal for her to get married."

"B-but this is Alex we're talking about...!"

"She has a boyfriend. It's only natural to consider marriage."

"E-even though you said that..."

Kagami was silent. He didn't know what he wanted to say.

"After she gets married, that man will be the priority, right? I don't really understand, but Alex will change. What if she doesn't play basketball with us anymore? I don't want that!"

"..."

Himuro also looked quietly at the church.

Kagami couldn't help but be sad.

"If she gets married...then..."

It would be as if we were strangers.

Kagami bit back the last part of his sentence. He didn't want to say it outright, as it would feel as if Alex really was leaving them.

"Taiga..."

"..."

Kagami didn't speak. Himuro patted his head. "Let's go back."

Himuro tugged on his wrist, and Kagami followed silently behind him.

pg4

The next day, Himuro was waiting at the basketball court, a little anxious. In order to calm himself down, he started dribbling, but the ball soon rolled away from him. He sighed and chased after it.

"Is Taiga not coming?"

Thinking of the way Kagami was the day before, Himuro thought that it was very likely that he wouldn't come. However, if Kagami didn't come, it would be just him and Alex. Himuro wasn't confident that he could act as if nothing had happened.

Himuro was picking up the ball, muttering angrily to himself, when the fence squeaked open. It was Kagami.

"Taiga! You made me wait!" Himuro ran up to him.

Kagami scratched his head sheepishly. "Sorry. I was a bit ridiculous yesterday with the thing about Alex."

"It's okay. I was very surprised too."

Himuro asked him if he was still thinking about it. Kagami was quiet for awhile before he answered. "I thought about it a lot last night. I didn't have a reason, so why did I feel unhappy? And then I decided..."

"Ah."

Himuro had also spent a long time thinking the night before. He wanted to know what conclusion Kagami had come to.

"I've decided not to think about it anymore!"

Himuro was dumbfounded. "...what?"

"I'm not going to think about it anymore! If I don't get something, I'm just going to ask Alex."

"...oh, but..."

"That's why, Tatsuya, I need you to do me a favor."

Kagami looked uncharacteristically serious. Seeing him like that, Himuro couldn't help but feel anxious. "What is it?"

"Please help me ask Alex."

"...ask Alex?"

"Yeah."

"..."

After ten seconds, Himuro finally registered his meaning. "Why me?!"

Kagami's face turned red.

"B-because it wouldn't be polite of me to ask! I'm a boy. It's embarrassing to ask 'Are you getting married?'"

"But I'll get embarrassed too!"

"Ah, you will?!" Kagami looked at him incredulously. "But you're usually very calm and collected!"

"This and that are two different things! I'd still be embarrassed at embarrassing things!"

"Tatsuya can definitely do it!"

Kagami looked over at Himuro, who felt his breath hitch and looked away. Kagami's trust and confidence were Himuro's weaknesses. However, Himuro hadn't agreed to his proposal yet. After all, Kagami himself said that it was something boys would feel embarrassed to ask. Why would he agree to it, then?

Himuro had also thought about simply confronting Alex. However, he had only saw Alex as a 'coach' before, and now, he began to view her as a 'woman.' In addition, to ask her if she was going to get married required some courage. It was a delicate question. When should he ask? What kind of expression should he make? Himuro couldn't make up his mind, so he gave up the idea. Therefore, even though Kagami had asked him to, he didn't plan on asking.

"..."

Himuro snuck a peak at Kagami, who was still looking at him. A feeling of guilt flooded his heart. However, he suddenly remembered something that Alex had said.

Alex had told him, "Don't let Taiga pressure you into doing something you're not comfortable with doing."

'That's right,' Himuro thought to himself. 'I should listen to Alex right now.'

Himuro made up his mind and said, "I won't ask."

"Hah?! Why not?!"

Upon hearing Himuro's refusal, Kagami's eyebrows drooped and he looked disappointed. Himuro felt his resolve shake. He took a deep breath to calm himself. There were a lot of reasons why he didn't want to do it, and he chose the simplest one to tell Kagami first.

"If we ask her, she'll want to know why we're asking. We can't just say 'We saw you yesterday!'"

"Oh...you're right..."

Himuro, upon seeing that Kagami had understood, told him his plan.

"So, this is how we're going to proceed." Kagami gulped when he heard Himuro's solemn voice. "We're going to keep what we saw yesterday a secret."

Kagami looked at him, surprised. In order to make himself sound more convincing, Himuro spoke with more force. "We'll just wait and see if she is getting married. If she really is, then she'll tell us. We have to wait for her to tell us by herself."

"..eh..." Kagami muttered doubtfully. Himuro himself wasn't too convinced either, but he had decided that this was the best solution.

"She'll tell us in a few days."

If it was something important, Alex would definitely tell them. Himuro smiled at Kagami. He wanted to believe it.

Kagami looked at him, unsure whether or not to believe him. Himuro waited patiently. Finally, Kagami laughed and said, "Yeah, you're right!"

Upon seeing Kagami laughing again, Himuro felt relieved. If Kagami could believe it, then so could he.

pg5

During the next few days, Kagami, Himuro and Alex were together most of the time. They practiced basketball and were careful with what they said. Although at times, the two of them would think 'What do we usually talk about?', they tried their hardest. They didn't know if their efforts worked, but Alex didn't bring it up.

Whenever she said, "I have something to tell both of you," the two of them would tense up, but it always had to do with basketball. On several occasions, both Kagami and Himuro wanted to shout "This is not what I want to hear!" but they held themselves back.

The two of them started to think that they may have seen it wrong, or that maybe Alex wanted to keep the whole boyfriend thing a secret.

One day, after practice, the three of them went shopping. Alex was walking when she

suddenly stopped and stared inside a store.

"What is it, Alex?" Kagami asked.

Himuro followed Alex's gaze and felt his heart stop for a moment.

"Sorry, I got caught up," Alex laughed, looking a little embarrassed.

It was a huge white three-layered wedding cake.

"Wedding cake..."

Upon hearing Himuro's words, Kagami looked through the store window, and then back at Himuro. The two of them looked at each other, as if to say, 'The topic finally came up!' Since Alex was staring fascinatingly at the wedding cake, that could only mean...

While the two of them were contemplating, someone from inside the store came out.

Alex noticed him and called out, "Priest!"

The man was older and was wearing a black uniform. He turned around and smiled when he recognized Alex's face.

"Hello, Miss Garcia! Are you with your students today?"

He smiled down at the two while Kagami and Himuro greeted him.

Alex patted their heads happily. "They're not my school's students. They're my own apprentices." The priest smiled at them.

"The two of them are very promising," Alex continued. Upon hearing that, both Kagami's and Himuro's faces lit up. However, Alex's next sentence surprised them.

"Ah, Father, can I talk to you about something? I need your advice."

"Yes. Let's go into the Church to talk."

Himuro and Kagami sulked.

Church.

Advice.

Those things...

Those 2 things...made Kagami's and Himuro's heart jump faster than a bullet train.

"Taiga, Tatsuya, that's all for today. Bye." Alex waved at them.

"Ah...yeah, see you tomorrow." Himuro finally managed to force out a smile. Alex then raised her head, as if she suddenly thought of something.

"Sorry, I can't make it to practice tomorrow."

"Huh?"

"I have something to take care of tomorrow," Alex said, blushing slightly. It was very rare of her to do that. Both Himuro and Kagami stared at each other.

Did that mean that tomorrow, she was going to...?!

The two of them couldn't calm down.

pg6

The next day, right after class, the two of them went to the church. They hid in the bushes, peering anxiously at the church. It was very quiet, the doors were closed, and there was no one in the yard.

"It's...different from what I expected," Kagami said quietly.

"Yeah..." Himuro nodded.

Even though the two of them had never been to a wedding before, they thought that weddings were supposed to be livelier.

"Is it over...?"

Upon hearing Himuro's words, Kagami let out a loud yell. At that moment, the church door opened

"!"

Himuro and Kagami held their breaths. Two men walked out. One wore a suit while the other wore a Hawaiian style shirt.

The two of them had seen the man in the suit before. They pressed their faces toward the bush to see better.

"He's the guy that went to the jewelry store with Alex," Himuro said. "That means that Alex is also..."

Himuro stared at the door. Even though it was open, he couldn't see if there was anyone else inside from his angle. Himuro clucked his tongue lightly.

"The bride is lovely," Kagami heard the men say.

Upon hearing the word 'bride,' Kagami's and Himuro's ears perked up and they eavesdropped on the conversation.

The two men took some cigarettes out while they stood in the yard. "She is very beautiful. I knew from the moment I saw her that she was the one," said the man they had seen with Alex the other day.

The man wearing the Hawaiian shirt nodded. "I understand why you wanted her so desperately. If you hadn't gone after her, then I would have."

"Right? I knew that this was the last chance, so I put a lot of effort." The man wearing the suit smiled shyly. However, Kagami and Himuro did not find it funny at all. As they thought, this man was Alex's boyfriend.

Kagami took his head out from the bushes and turned to look at Himuro.

"Tatsuya, that is...!"

Alex's boyfriend! He couldn't finish his sentence.

Kagami no longer see him as a nice, warmhearted man.

"What is he laughing about?! This man is pestering Alex...!"

Himuro stared angrily at the man. If looks could kill, the man would have already been dead.

"T-Tatsuya...?"

"She can't marry someone like this..."

Himuro didn't like the man's behavior. Kagami was slightly surprised at Himuro's strong reaction. But he, too, believed that the man's words were inexcusable.

"Even if she wants to get married, she should never marry this kind of man..."

"Yeah," Kagami agreed, nodding.

Himuro and Kagami continued to glare at the two men, who leisurely smoked their cigarettes. The conversation changed from Alex to another topic.

"What time do you leave for New York?" The man in the Hawaiian shirt asked, making both Himuro and Kagami freeze up.

The man in the suit replied, "This weekend. I start working next week."

The other man threw his cigarette into an ash tray. "Are you going alone, or is she going with you?"

"She is going with me." The man in the suit nodded happily. "It took so long to find her, so of course I'm going to bring her."

"Don't be ridiculous!!"

The two men were startled by the yell and turned around to see two boys glaring angrily at them.

"Was that the two of you just now?" The man in the suit asked, glancing at Himuro and Kagami.

Kagami stared furiously at him. "You're wrong! Alex didn't say anything about it, and she would never hide something so important from us!"

Himuro was also trying to contain his anger. And then...

"What's all this noise about?" Footsteps came from the church as a person came out. It was Alex, who looked at Himuro and Kagami, surprised. "What are you two doing here?"

The two of them looked at their coach and then gasped, not because of the fact that she appeared, but at what she wore. She wore a shiny a-line dress wrapped slimly around her waist, laces around her chest and a diamond necklace around her neck. A veil covered her face.

Alex looked beautiful.

Himuro and Kagami gawked at her, forgetting to breath. Alex turned to the two men.

"What happened?"

When Alex turned her head, Himuro and Kagami were freed from her spell. In a blink of an eye, the two of them jumped at the grown men, yelling, "We will not let Alex leave!" before kicking them.

The man in the suit fell down. The man in the Hawaiian shirt grabbed Himuro's wrist, but he is overpowered two to one. Himuro's and Kagami's combination attack overwhelmed him.

Alex was surprised and shouted, "Tatsuya, Taiga, stop!"

The two of them instinctively stopped and glanced back at her. Alex, clutching the hem of her dress, was running anxiously toward them. However, because she was not used to the weight of her dress and the heels, she fell forward.

"Waaaah!"

"Alex!" Kagami yelled, rushing forward. Himuro too threw off the man's hand that was clutching his wrist and ran toward her. However, Alex's athleticism saved her and she righted herself before she fell.

"I almost got the dress dirty," Alex said, relieved. That was when Himuro and Kagami came barging over. She looked at them. "What are you two doing here?! Look, the

dress is all wrinkled."

"Don't go, Alex!!"

"What?"

Kagami hugged her and then raised his head to talk to her. "Don't leave us, Alex."

"What are you talking about?" Alex asked, puzzled.

"The men said that you are going to New York," Himuro replied. He also clutched Alex's waist, pointing at the man wearing the suit.

The man was still on the ground. The other man walked over and asked Alex, "Are you okay?"

"You wouldn't get married and leave us, would you? You're our coach!" Kagami said earnestly.

"What are you talking about?" Alex asked, dumbfounded.

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"I'm so sorry!" Alex apologized, pressing down Himuro and Kagami's heads. Even though she didn't do anything wrong, both Kagami and Himuro were too embarrassed to look up. They feel like digging a hole and hiding inside.

Looking at the three of them apologizing, the two men laughed and said, "That's alright. It was just a misunderstanding." That only made Himuro and Kagami even more embarrassed.

Alex told them that the two men were wedding consultants and that they owned the jewelry store next to the church. Their company came today to take photographs of a wedding.

And Alex was the model.

They met because of a stray dog. The dog's name was Alex. Alex found it when Kagami and Himuro went on their little adventure. She tried to find its owner, but failed, so she brought it to an animal protection center. The man in the suit was the dog's new owner, and that's how he met Alex. He also needed a model at that time, so he asked her for her help, and Alex agreed.

Alex lowered her head. "This is all because I didn't tell them anything."

"You didn't tell anyone?" The man in the suit asked.

Alex said, slightly embarrassed, "Even though it's only for a little bit, wearing a wedding dress is still inconsistent with my image..."

The man wearing the Hawaiian shirt smiled. "Don't say that. It suits you, right, kids?"

Himuro and Kagami still hadn't lifted their heads. They just mumbled.

Alex forcibly patted their heads. "Hey, you two, say something. If you don't, it'll only make me more embarrassed."

Himuro and Kagami shared a look and then carefully lifted their heads, taking in Alex's bridal appearance. Kagami was a bit overwhelmed, and Himuro cast a glance at the two men, but kept quiet.

"Don't you have anything to say? How mean," Alex pouted. "Even if you don't mean it, you should say something like, 'Nice.' You two were so cute before, saying things like, 'Don't go, Alex!!'"

"Don't bring it up!" Himuro and Kagami cried out. The two of them then fell silent, suddenly reminded again that their actions were caused by a misunderstanding.

Unable to find a way to refute her claim, Himuro instead tried to deflect the blame. "That is because Alex did a lot of things that could be misunderstood!"

"What kind of things?"

"You started to pay attention of your hair and your skin!"

"Well, of course. These photographs are going in a book. I wanted to make every little thing as perfect as possible."

"But you also started wearing perfume! We were very surprised!" Himuro said angrily.

"I didn't wear perfume."

"But your scent suddenly changed!"

"Really?" Alex thought back, trying to remember. "Oh, that was probably sunscreen."

"S-sunscreen?!"

"Yes. I bought it a long time ago, but I haven't applied it in a while. You guys probably think that it smells strong." Alex laughed.

Himuro was speechless. Kagami asked, "Then what about the wedding cake you were staring at yesterday?"

"Oh, I just wanted to eat it."

"Hah?!"

"Don't be so surprised. Taiga, didn't you also think that the three-layered cake

would be delicious?"

"Then what about the priest? What did you want to talk to him about?"

"The priest is close to the church. It's about time for the charity sale, so I went to ask him about the development of the event."

"H-how can this be...?" Kagami said, stunned.

"The two of you overthink too much." Alex was a little surprised, but at the same time, she couldn't help but find it interesting.

She laughed and placed a hand on Himuro's forehead. "I would've expected this from Taiga, but Tatsuya is jumping to conclusions too."

Himuro pursed his lips and knocked Alex's hand away. "I can make mistakes too."

Kagami was angry. "What? So I'm supposed to be the reckless kind?!"

Watching the three of them, the man in the suit clapped his hands and said, "Let's take a picture."

The man in the Hawaiian shirt agreed. "This is a rare opportunity. I'll go get the camera," he said, walking back toward the church.

"Let's take a picture, okay?" Alex smiled.

Kagami, who had been angry just moments before, was suddenly very excited. "Really?!" However, Himuro turned his head away.

"Tatsuya, you don't want to do it?"

Himuro didn't respond and simply clutched Alex's dress.

"Crouch down."

"What?"

"Just crouch down."

"Okay."

Alex crouched down, watching Himuro carefully. He cupped his mouth in his hands and leaned forward, whispering into her ear, "You're beautiful."

Alex was surprised, but before she could respond, Himuro had already moved away.

"That was..."

"I didn't want someone else to make me say it. If I want to say it, I will," Himuro

said, his ears turning red.

"Ah, well, thank you!" Alex said, half embarrassed, half happy. She leaned forward and hugged the two children.

"Wait a minute, Alex!"

"What are you doing?!"

Himuro and Kagami protested in vain, as Alex hugged them even closer.

She beamed happily. "Coach is very fortunate to have such silly disciples!"